

(*Vinago delalandei orientalis*, *Pisorchina capensis pusilla*, and (*Glaucidium capense rufum*) already described in the 'Annals of the Transvaal Museum.'

Mr. Haagner furnishes a further note on the mandibular hook of the Honey-Guide (S. Afr. Journ. 1907, p. 1), now found in *Indicator major* as well as in *I. variegatus*. Bird Notes from East London by Mr. Wood, and a record of the Black-tailed Godwit from Durban by Mr. E. C. Chubb, conclude the part, except for the obituaries of Mr. A. D. Millar and Capt. Shelley.

88. Thomson on Bird-Marking.

[The Possibilities of Bird-Marking, with special reference to the Aberdeen University Bird-Migration Inquiry. By A. Landsborough Thomson. Reprinted from Proc. Roy. Phys. Soc. Edinb. vol. xviii. pp. 204-218.]

The author discusses the various methods of marking birds, the value of the results, and the history of the development of the inquiry. The results obtained are then considered, and an important account added of those of the Aberdeen scheme in particular. This excellent pamphlet should be in the hands of all our readers.

XXVII.—Letters, Extracts, and Notes.

WE have received the following letter addressed to the Editors:—

SIRS,—In your January issue, page 198, under the heading of "Mathews on the Birds of Australia," there appears the following:—"On the first page we have a reference to Mr. H. G. Barnard's statement in 'The Emu' that the eggs of *Rallina tricolor* are white, a fact entirely opposed to previous experience; we should be inclined to agree with Mr. Mathews, and ask whether a single clutch might not be white, while normal eggs are spotted."

The eggs in question were collected by Mr. Barnard for me, so you will perhaps excuse my taking exception to the

opinion as expressed by you above. Mr. Barnard is recognized as one of the best and most experienced of Australian collectors, and as one not likely to make an important statement without being sure of his facts. In the case you refer to there is not the slightest doubt that the clutch taken by him belonged to *Rallina tricolor*.

Might I ask you where it has ever been proved, by shooting the bird at the nest, that *Rallina tricolor* lays spotted eggs? Such a statement has been made, but I can find no proof of it.

On the other hand, we have several instances of the white eggs being identified. Besides Mr. Barnard's experience, we have that of the late Mr. Broadbent (Campbell's 'Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds,' p. 744), and I have another set of the white eggs taken by R. Hislop (a well-known collector) at Cooktown, Queensland, in 1897. Mr. Barnard, in writing to me after I mentioned 'The Ibis' article, says: "I cannot understand Mr. Mathews hinting that the white eggs of *Rallina tricolor* are only freaks; the spotted and the white eggs are not the same shape, not to mention the colour. Mr. B. Jardine had two or three sets of each, the clutches of white eggs containing four only each, while those of the spotted eggs contained seven or eight each. Both he and Mr. C. Jardine informed me that while the Red-necked Rail made practically no nest, the other bird made a nest of grass in a tussock like the Pectoral Rail. Mr. B. Jardine could have cleared the matter up long ago, but, like myself, he was not aware that there was any confusion between the two birds."

I may mention here that the Messrs. Jardine have resided at Somerset, Cape York, all their lives, and possess a thorough knowledge of most of the birds there, one of their puzzles being the identity of the second Rail in this locality: this bird beat Mr. H. G. Barnard also at the time.

To sum up:—Mr. Barnard proved conclusively that the *Rallina tricolor* he shot laid four white eggs; Messrs. Jardine have taken several clutches of four white eggs each, similar to Mr. Barnard's clutch; I have a second set of white eggs

said, by a reliable collector, to be those of *Rallina tricolor*; the late Mr. Broadbent took white eggs of the same species. The number of eggs to the white clutch has not been known to exceed four, while the spotted clutch usually contains six or eight, the eggs being of a different shape, size, and texture of shell, the nests also are totally different.

It is well known that a second Rail, as yet not identified, but somewhat similar in colour and quite different in habits to *Rallina tricolor*, inhabits the Cape York country, and probably extends south along the coast.

Is it not more reasonable to attribute the spotted eggs to this bird, rather than to assume that the many known clutches of white eggs are freaks of *Rallina tricolor*?

I am, Sirs,

Yours, &c.,

'Belltrees,'

Scone, N. S. Wales.

April 21st, 1912.

H. L. WHITE,

M.B.O.U., R.A.O.U.

New and rare Birds from S.E. Tibet.—Col. F. M. Bailey, whose adventurous journey across Central Asia has lately been described in the 'Geographical Journal' (xxxix. p. 334), made a small collection of birds at high altitudes, a selection from which he has presented to the British Museum. Amongst these are examples of *Babax kosłowi* and *Phylloscopus homeyeri* (neither of which were previously represented in the National Collection), *Palæornis derbianus* (Shinden Gompa, 13,500 ft.), and a fine series of Phasianidæ—*Tetraophasis szecheni*, *Crossoptilon tibetanum*, *Ithaginis geoffroyi*, *Thaumalea amherstiae*, *Phasianus elegans*, and *Perdix sifanica*.

Shedding of the sheath of the bill of a Penguin.—At the meeting of the Zoological Society of London on the 7th of May last Mr. D. Seth-Smith, F.Z.S., exhibited two horn-like sheaths which had been shed from the orange-coloured patch at the base of the lower mandible of a King Penguin (*Aptenodytes pennanti*) living in the Society's Gardens. Mr. W. E. de Winton had observed the shedding of this

epidermal sheath in a bird living in the Gardens in 1898 (P. Z. S. 1898, p. 900) ; but although the present specimen had been carefully watched during two successive moults in March and October 1911 (P. Z. S. 1912, p. 60), no sign of this process had been observed. The bird, however, went through another complete moult in March and April of the present year (1912), and shortly after this was completed the epidermal covering of these orange-coloured patches became loose and finally fell off ; the pieces somewhat resembled the wing-cases of a large beetle, being semi-transparent and of a clear orange-colour.

Additions to the British Bird-List.—In the number of ‘British Birds’ for October last (vol. v. p. 124) Mr. M. J. Nicoll records the occurrence of a small flock of the Slender-billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*) on Romney Marsh. Three of them were “obtained” and examined by Mr. Nicoll. This is a new addition to the British List, but the bird occurs in the Mediterranean in the winter not unfrequently.

In the same Journal (v. p. 126) Dr. Hartert separates the English form of the Green Woodpecker as *Picus viridis flavus*. He considers that “not less than five forms of this bird may be distinguished in Europe alone,” and proposes to name the Italian form *Picus viridis pronus*.

In No. 1 of the ‘Scottish Naturalist’ for this year Mr. Eagle Clarke announces the occurrence of a Pine-Bunting (*Emberiza leucocephala*) at Fair Isle on October 30th, 1911. This intruder from the East is quite new to the British List. The occurrence in England of authentic specimens of the White-collared Flycatcher (*Muscicapa collaris*) and the Thrush Nightingale (*Daulias luscinia*) are also recorded in ‘British Birds’ for February last.

Mr. Wollaston's New Expedition to New Guinea.—The Committee of the B. O. U. have by no means given up their plans for the further exploration of New Guinea and its wonderful avifauna. Mr. A. J. R. Wollaston, a member of

the last British Expedition, sailed from Marseilles on the 24th of May for Dutch Borneo, where he intends to engage the services of at least eighty picked men for carriers. Mr. C. B. Kloss, F.Z.S., M.B.O.U., of the Federated Malay States, who will accompany Mr. Wollaston, is still in England, but leaves very shortly for Singapore, where he will be joined by the trained Dyak collectors who are to accompany the Expedition. The whole party will leave Batavia some time in August, and land, probably at the mouth of the Oetakwa River, at the beginning of September. A very strong motor-launch of light draft, specially built for the purpose, has been shipped to Singapore, and should prove invaluable on the lower reaches of the Oetakwa. The Netherlands Government have again shown the utmost kindness, and will facilitate the work of the British Expedition in every possible way.

The principal object of the new Expedition will be the exploration of the Snowy Range (the Nassau Range of the Dutch), which was approached but not attained by the recent British Expedition, as well as by the Dutch Expedition to the Oetakwa River in 1910. An attempt will be made to reach the water-parting, and, if possible, to ascend Mount Carstensz, the highest peak of the range, 15,964 ft.

Mr. Wollaston hopes to land in New Guinea by September, so as to take advantage of the comparatively dry months of November and December. He will there be joined by Mr. C. Boden Kloss, who has travelled much in the Malay countries and is now Curator of the Museum at Kuala Lumpur. Mr. Wollaston hopes also to obtain the service of a geologist.

Death of Dr. Wilhelm Blasius.—With much regret we read the announcement of the death, at Brunswick, on the 3rd of June last, of Dr. Wilhelm Blasius, a German fellow-worker well known to many of us, and a Foreign Member of the B. O. U. We hope to be able to give some account of his life and work in our next number.